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ABSTRACT

Since it is an acknowledged fact that school restructuring will not occur without the support and commitment of teachers, this study attempted to explore teachers' expressions of visionary leadership characteristics. Participants were selected from among teachers who participated in a four-day workshop on school restructuring. The sample consisted of 2 male teachers and 10 female teachers with 2 to 28 years of teaching experience among them; the study instrument was a long interview guide using an open-ended question format. The data were analyzed to categorize the teachers on a visionary scale that included the Stabilizer or Traditionalist, the Catalyst, the Troubleshooter or Diplomat, and the Visionary Leader. Comparing themes showed that categorizing teachers on a continuum from non-visionary to visionary was impossible, and that the classifications of "visionary" and "non-visionary" were troublesome as the first depicted all strengths and the second failed to reveal strengths that were actually present. The analysis also found that visionaries and catalysts were the most individualistic, that stabilizers were the conservative teachers, and that the troubleshooters and stabilizers were both present-oriented (except that stabilizers were future-oriented with students). An overall finding was that each teacher had something to contribute and that any team must have all these types to accomplish major change throughout an organization. (Contains 132 references.) (JB)

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Reconceptualizing the Role of Teacher Leaders: Collaboration Among All Staff Members

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Reconceptualizing the Role of Teacher Leaders
Collaboration Among All Staff Members

Introduction

"Where change is concerned, the teacher is clearly the key" (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991, p. 14). Purkey and Smith (1983) state it is a fact that school restructuring will not occur without the support and commitment of teachers. The importance of teachers as leaders appears in a sizable amount of literature on school change (Barth, 1988; Fay, 1992; Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991; Hord, 1992; Johnston, Bickel and Wallace, 1990; Leithwood, 1992; Lieberman, 1992; Livingston, 1992; Wasley, 1991). Adding the notion that teachers are the key to change to recent studies on effective leadership that emphasize vision and collaboration, framed the research problem for this study.

This research proposed listening to selected teachers, determining if there are any visionaries among teachers. Literature on vision gives clues of what to expect from people labeled visionary. Kurtz (1991) describes visionaries as people who can "articulate an idealistic set of conditions" (p. 30). Visionaries act as a "compass that points the direction to be taken, inspiring enthusiasm that allows people to buy into and take part in shaping the school's mission" (Sergiovanni, 1990 p. 57). Rogus (1988) claims that effective leaders in academic settings work in "collegial ways toward obtaining consensus on the vision" (p. 49). The literature on effective visionary leadership includes collaboration as a necessary element. Rogus (1988) provides an excellent summary of visioning and visionary leadership:

> Vision is a mental journey from the known to the unknown, creating a future from a montage of hopes, dreams, facts, threats, and opportunities. Effective leaders articulate a realistic, credible, attractive future for the organization, a condition that is better than what now exists. They are able to identify the opportunities and dangers associated with that vision; identify factors which are pivotal to its achievement; and sequence major events toward implementing the dream. They act on the vision and personify it; they repeat it time and again. The vision is incorporated in the organization's culture and is reinforced through the strategy and decision-making processes. It is constantly evaluated for possible needed changes.
>
> (Rogus, 1988, p. 49)

Do teachers see visionary elements of leadership as a part of who they are? This study attempted to explore teachers' expressions of visionary leadership characteristics.

Researchers' perspectives of teachers comprise the majority of literature on what teachers would say about the process of leadership and change. The literature on school change or restructuring lacks perceptions of classroom teachers (Murphy, Evertson and Radnofsky, 1991). The bulk of the discussions centers on what others are saying about teachers.

Lortie's study (1975) that found teachers as individualistic, conservative and present oriented is cited in many studies on teachers. Teachers are thought to be primarily interested in their own classroom and look for what helps them within those four walls. Concerns beyond the classroom are not the focus for the majority of teachers. Words expressed for teachers are, "Give me things I can use in my classroom," or "If it does not concern my classroom, leave me alone." The findings appear to be as valid today as they were in 1975 (Fullan, 1991; Lortie, 1986; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Rogus, 1988; Foley, 1993). Kreuger and Parish (1982) state "not much will happen if teachers choose not to have it happen" (p. 132).

The loose coupling in schools lacks the "glue" to enforce policies that permits teachers to act individually rather than collaboratively (Weick, 1976; Wehlage, Smith and Lipman, 1992; Wise, 1979). "Classrooms are isolated workplaces subject to little organizational control" (Purkey and Smith, 1983, p. 441). This autonomy of teachers allows them to control the fate of change efforts initiated by others.

Individualistic aspects of teachers are contrary to visionary characteristics reported in the literature. "Visioning is a joint process" (Miles and Louis, 1990, p. 59), depending on interaction among people. The behavior of visionaries relates strongly to teamwork and integration. They generate cooperation, displaying respect for personnel.

The conservative perspective views teachers as resisting change rather than experimenting with new methods. Cuban (1984) depicts this finding with the following observation:

> I have been in many classrooms in the last decade. When I watched teachers in secondary schools a flash of recognition jumped out of my memory and swept over me. What I saw was almost exactly what I remembered of the junior and senior high school classrooms that I sat in as a student and as a teacher in the mid 1950s. This acute sense of recall about how teachers were teaching occurred in many different schools. How, I asked myself, could teaching over a forty-year period <u>seem</u>, and I mean to underline the word, almost unchanged? (p. 1)

Teachers in Lortie's (1975, 1986), Goodlad and Klein's (1970) and Cuban's (1984, 1990) studies seem to teach the way they were taught. Teachers are depicted as saying, "It was good enough for me so I'm going to teach the same way."

Conservative traits do not fit visionary leaders. Conservative teachers teach the way they were taught. Lortie (1975) sums up change to these teachers as "more of the same" (p. 184). There is nothing radical about innovations described by these teachers. Researchers talk about visionaries as taking calculated risks or leaps of faith (Manasse, 1986). It appears that visionary teachers would express more risk taking and radical changes in contrast to expressions of conservative behaviors.

If teachers are present oriented, it will be obvious that daily classroom incidents deeply affect them. The research literature emphasizes that teachers are not motivated by long-term goals. If this is the case, teachers would not talk in a visionary sense about the beliefs or direction of their schools.

Visionaries plan and look forward to the future (Barth, 1990; Bennis, 1984; Kouzes and Posner, 1987; Manasse, 1986; Sashkin, 1988). Teachers who are visionaries would articulate future plans for their schools rather than centering on present issues or immediate results.

Visionary teachers would be expected to respond in ways that are in contrast to the literature on individualistic, conservative and present oriented natures that represent teachers. Recent literature on effective leadership emphasizes vision and collaboration as crucial aspects. If visionary teachers are going to fill roles as school leaders, these elements appear to be important factors for effective leadership. We know that there are growth-seeking teachers, teachers who continually seek learning and growing opportunities (Howser, 1990), but are there teachers in schools with visionary characteristics?

Research Problem

The purpose of this research was to explore the concept of visionary leaders among teachers. While previous research focused on the importance of visionary leaders for school change, the majority of research does not include discussions of teachers as visionary leaders. Other literature calls for the necessity of teachers as leaders for educational change. If teachers are needed as leaders and visioning is important, can teachers fill the role of visionary school leaders? This research explored:

Do teachers articulate visionary characteristics?

Methodology

The most appropriate methodology for the proposed study was a qualitative approach using the long interview. The long interview allowed applicable visionary aspects to surface and captured the teachers' perspectives on what encouraged or discouraged change in schools. Open-ended questions helped avoid responses that participants thought the researcher wanted to hear. The interview guide used in this study consisted of seven questions purposely written not to mention teacher leaders or visionaries.

The sample consisted of growth-seeking teachers who volunteered to attend a four day workshop on school restructuring. Those teachers who were identified as returning to their classrooms to implement change in their school districts were selected for this research study. Since visionaries want to continue learning and are stimulated by new ideas from others, this setting was appropriate for finding the largest number of visionaries among kindergarten through twelfth grade teachers. These teachers appeared to want to learn about and all of them were in school leadership roles promoting school restructuring or change. The teachers represented a range of teaching levels from kindergarten through secondary, with secondary teachers chosen from different subject levels. The sample was as heterogeneous as possible regarding gender, age, and years of teaching experience. The sample consisted of two male teachers and ten female teachers, since females outnumbered males by that ratio in the workshops. Their ages ranged from twenty-six to fifty-eight with two to twenty-eight years of teaching experience. The twelve teachers selected from 380 potential research participants all taught in different schools. Their names have been changed to provide confidentiality.

Data from the interviews were analyzed to categorize teachers on a visionary scale devised from the literature. An attempt to group teachers as non-visionary, somewhat visionary, and visionary proved unsuccessful. Other categories were explored—career development stages, adult life cycle, career ladders—none of which lead to classifications that fit the teacher responses. An article by Robert Kurtz (1991) entitled "Stabilizer, Catalyst, Troubleshooter, or Visionary—Which are you?" provided an appropriate framework to describe the findings. The work of Carl Jung, Isabel Briggs-Myers, Peter Myers, David Keirsey and Marilyn Bates provided a basis for leadership temperaments. Keirsey and Bates (1984) identified four distinct leadership styles using the combination of preferences derived from the Myers-Briggs Type

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Indicator. These styles are the sensing/judging (SJ), intuitive/feeling (NF), sensing/perceiving (SP), and intuitive/thinking (NT). Keirsey and Bates (1984) gave these four styles another title that captured the essence of each. The SJ is the Stabilizer or Traditionalist; the NF is the Catalyst; the SP is a Troubleshooter or Diplomat; and the NT is the Visionary leader. The descriptive titles were chosen for this study to provide easier understanding for the reader.

Stabilizers (SJs)

"I see myself as helpless to change some **big** things . . ." "If everyone had the same philosophy about education, that would be ideal" (Kris interview, p. 1 & 3). These are typical statements of Stabilizers who respond as realists. They feel unable to change big issues and have difficulty envisioning abstractions. This sensible nature typifies stabilizers and at first glance the conservative aspect of stabilizers predominated, making them appear to be the type of teachers from Lortie's (1975) study that inhibits change in schools. Upon closer examination the stabilizers are not as individualistic as other temperaments since they desired to meet the needs of others and wanted to keep people informed.

Advocates for school reform recognize the need for collaboration and those stabilizing traits would contribute to that effort. The stabilizers' present-oriented traits surfaced because they worked to settle issues and plans quickly. However, their goal with students was to prepare them as useful adult members of society. With students, stabilizers were more future oriented than some of the other types of teachers.

The stabilizers in this study demonstrated a willingness to learn new educational strategies and were open to change. After the workshops, the researcher perceived them to be visionary, but their answers to the interview questions classified them differently. Their temperament was comfortable with tradition, desiring conformity, but not against change. The literature indicated stabilizers oppose change when it happens too often. The stabilizers interviewed for this study would be an asset to a leadership team because they could provide a balance to other temperaments who push for constant change.

One third of the sample from this study are stabilizers (four out of twelve). Other studies indicate the majority of teachers (56%) are stabilizers. Since this sample did not represent the general teaching population and was drawn from growth-seeking teachers, it would be expected to have fewer stabilizers.

Catalysts (NFs)

The catalysts identified in this study spoke with enthusiasm for new ideas. This is typical of this temperament, however, they do not believe they are in a position to change. The following excerpt illustrates that attitude:

> If the administration first would go to workshops and learn. I think it's [what we do in schools] not going to change until somebody in authority knows what kids are about and what teaching is about and they need to . . . I mean you [the teacher] can't change it, you know.
> (Mollie interview, p. 7)

The catalysts all expressed frustration with administrators who would not listen to their ideas. However, they felt colleagues accepted them and described excellent teacher-student relationships.

> Most educators are like me, they are happy in their classrooms. The ones that really are good are so involved in their classrooms . . . [The school] likes people like that because they don't cause any trouble, so they like people who like to teach because then they don't get out of their classroom. That's why we can never do anything as a group. There's too many of us in the classroom and we're not activists. (Mollie interview, p. 17)

The research of Lortie (1975, 1986) and Keirsey and Bates (1984) agrees with Mollie's statement. Conservative, individualistic, and present oriented teachers who do not make waves occupy the majority of school classrooms. Mollie felt pressure not to create dissension, sensing that schools do not like troublemakers. Mollie concluded that "if somebody really wants to reform, they won't be in teaching long" (Mollie interview, p. 17).

Gary, another catalyst, reflected, "I think the bureaucracy—which is supposed to help us, right?—instead has done what bureaucracies seem inevitable to do, exist for their own benefit while hindering our own efforts to reach kids" (Gary interview, p. 7). He exemplifies a catalyst having an intense commitment to his students. Systems that hinder relationships with students are a frustration to catalysts.

The catalysts, with all their skills in human relations, still preferred to work alone, representing the individualistic nature of teachers described in Lortie's (1975) study. They are not conservative, since new ideas excite them. Catalysts study and implement recent strategies from the professional literature. On a leadership team, their enthusiasm for new concepts stimulates others. Other team members must

recognize a catalyst's need to discuss these ideas. Consequently, catalysts will resist mandates for change unless they have been a part of prior discussion.

Catalysts make up the majority of teachers who were interviewed for this study (five out of twelve). Other studies indicate 36% of teachers are catalysts compared to nearly 42% in this study. Since the sample for this study was drawn from growth seeking teachers, it is logical that there would be more catalysts in that group than the general teacher population.

Troubleshooters (SPs)

Troubleshooters are very observant and know what is going on in an organization. They have difficulty designing a plan but have skills in detecting potential problems. The one troubleshooter shooter found in this study diagnosed problems in her school's plan and admitted, "I'm not a person of vision but I can implement somebody else's vision." The troubleshooter has a free spirit and as Kathi said, " . . . I'm willing to try anything . . ." (interview, p. 3).

The troubleshooter was the present oriented educator both in dealing with students and solving school problems. Kathi's practicality gave her this focus, which would add strength to the leadership team. She, like other troubleshooters, may not comprehend the future vision, but her willingness to change and determine hindrances during the implementation stage make her invaluable for school change. Troubleshooters are not conservative or individualistic. This temperament possesses flexibility and a non-judgmental attitude, which contributes to collaborative effort that is promoted for school change.

Troubleshooters are rare in the teaching field, studies indicate only 2% of educators are of this type. Although this study had one out of twelve (8%), that percentage appears to be high according to studies from the general teaching population. What should be of interest and concern to educators is that the student population consists of 38% troubleshooters.

Visionaries (NTs)

The visionaries found in this study talked about being far less concerned with the "little steps along the way" as Ingrid stated it, than with the "big step at the end" (Ingrid, interview, p. 1). They felt

very different than the majority of teachers as Paul stated, "I didn't want to do it the way everybody else was doing it, I was different" (Paul interview, p. 8). Ingrid described herself as being "out here and I need somebody to reel me in" (interview, p. 6).

The visionaries in this study had the strengths of being future oriented and non-conservative, which are needed for schools to change. However, their independence made them individualistic in nature. Ingrid and Paul promoted collaboration as they learned from other people's ideas and wanted others to hear what they envisioned. Their thinking was analytical and Ingrid admitted she was too abstract for some teachers. Those traits, along with their intense focus on a vision made them appear impersonal. The other three temperaments are needed on the school team with visionaries to complement their leadership weaknesses of independence, getting people to understand the vision, and lack of sensitivity for peoples' feelings.

The answer to the research question is that visionary characteristics are a part of a few teachers' lives. The majority of the teachers interviewed did not talk in a visionary sense. There are visionaries among teachers but they are present in small numbers. Two of the twelve teachers (16%) in this study were visionaries, while other studies indicate 6% visionaries among the general teacher population. The researcher anticipated at least fifty percent would be "visionaries" for this study.

Summary

This study analyzed twelve growth-seeking teachers for visionary characteristics. The researcher did not use a random sample, but instead selected the participants who appeared to have the most visionary traits.

The Myers-Briggs information on visionaries had differences from the other "visionary" literature. To distinguish the differences in the findings, the Myers-Briggs visionary will be without quotation marks and the other "visionary" literature will appear in quotations. The "visionary" literature depicted "visionaries" as possessing three temperaments—visionary, catalyst, and troubleshooter—instead of being one of four temperaments.

It is the catalyst who possessed the best skills in human relationships, yet the "visionary" literature described "visionaries" as the ones who could mobilize others and were effective communicators.

The Myers-Briggs literature on temperaments concluded that visionaries are not the best communicators, having difficulty getting others to understand. Visionaries say things once and expect people to remember. Because visionaries get so technical and present too many details, they often lose their audience. In contrast, catalysts are excellent at promoting ideas to others. Visionaries fail to express appreciation of others, however to a catalyst expressing appreciation is important.

The troubleshooter's ability to spot immediate problems is not a skill possessed by visionaries. Since visionaries focus on the results, they may not see obstacles that interfere with reaching their vision; yet the "visionary" literature pictured "visionaries" as troubleshooters in their problem solving approach. Visionaries want to create and design, becoming less interested in the implementation. Troubleshooters are valuable people during implementation since their problem solving abilities give the project a better chance for survival.

The "visionary" literature may have misrepresented the "visionary" according to the Myers-Briggs literature on temperaments. Those doing research on the four leadership temperaments recognize the importance of a visionary if change is to take place in an organization. However, these scholars also identify weaknesses in visionaries. The "visionary" literature failed to mention any weaknesses, making it appear that a "visionary" possessed all the traits needed for organizational change. Scholars of the four temperaments deny the possibility of composite temperaments (Roback, 1952, Myers, 1980). It appears one person could not be visionary, catalyst and troubleshooter. According to the literature, one temperament will predominate even if people make a conscious effort to develop other temperaments. Individual participants in this study did not fit a combined role of visionary, catalyst and troubleshooter. Their stories for this research aligned with the Myers-Briggs literature.

By comparing themes that emerged from the interview data, it was discovered that categorizing teachers on a continuum from non-visionary to visionary was an impossibility. Two teachers seemed to fit the "visionary" end of the continuum and two fit the "non-visionary" end. However, both classifications were troublesome to the researcher since the "visionary" end depicted all strengths and the "non-visionary" end failed to reveal teachers' strengths. The major problem became the eight in the middle who originally

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were called "somewhat visionary." It became obvious to the researcher that there is no such person as a "somewhat visionary" since their interview responses did not classify them as a group.

The search for new categories led to information on the four temperaments. In light of this sample, every teacher fit in one of the temperament classifications, stabilizer (SJ), catalyst (NF), troubleshooter (SP), or visionary (NT). The temperament sorter, derived from the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, solved the confusion of some teachers seeming alike yet different since both the stabilizer and troubleshooter prefer sensation (S) while the catalyst and the visionary are both intuitive (N). The temperaments explained how some of the traits could be similar, yet provided the differences that typified the participants in this study.

The teacher ethos described in Lortie's (1975) study was revealed in all four of the temperaments. The visionaries and catalysts were the most individualistic, the stabilizers were the conservative teachers, and the troubleshooters and stabilizers were both present oriented, with the exception that stabilizers were future oriented with students. It is those three characteristics in teachers that restrict change. Since all teachers possess at least one of these traits the literature that emphasizes collaboration and team leadership becomes essential for school reform.

The weaknesses of one type of temperament are complemented by the strengths of another, yet people appear unaware of this in the dynamics of team leadership. The visionary cannot be the perfect leader. The visionary needs the stabilizer who pays attention to detail, developing policies and making sure principles are followed. The stabilizer will guard against change occurring too often so that the organization remains reliable and does not lose parents' trust. Catalysts are needed by the visionary to be spokespersons for the school. Their skill for dealing with people is valuable in an organization and they make sure there is a consensus so others do not feel left out. Without troubleshooters, the vision may never become a reality. Their ability to solve errors in a plan keeps the procedure moving forward. A troubleshooter's common sense in problem solving becomes important to the implementation of plans. Without a visionary, planned change is minimal and the status quo continues. Their ability to design future plans is a necessity for school change.

A major finding is that each teacher has something to contribute. There is not one flawless leader and the rest of the organization consists of non-leaders. As one participant said, leadership is "all the way through [the organization], it is each of us being positive in what we are doing." Any team that does not have the four types lacks the potential to accomplish major change throughout the organization. The important thing is understanding each other and knowing the contributions from each type.

Limitations

The limitations of this study include the possibility of other explanations for teacher categorization. The interviews occurred at the beginning of the school year and teachers may talk differently toward the end of the school year. Environmental and sociological issues may interfere with responses of interviewees. Perhaps there are other categories that did not surface in this sample since it represented only growth-seeking teachers.

The selected sample was an effort to find "visionaries" and was not intended to represent the teaching population. The long interview was the best means to find "visionaries" and resulted in finding other types of teacher leaders. The discovery of the temperament sorter came after data analysis from the interviews. If the desire is for percentages of teachers that represent each temperament, those numbers could be more efficiently and appropriately obtained by using the temperament sorter.

Questions and Recommendations for Further Research

This study on visionary leadership created questions about the "visionary" literature. Why were "visionaries" depicted with all positive traits? Could the "visionary" possess the traits of three temperaments? Why was the literature on the four temperaments, which has survived centuries of agreement and includes a visionary temperament, absent in the citations from the "visionary" writers?

There is a need for more research on the importance of visionary leadership, including not only what visionaries contribute but what they lack as leaders. The idea of the four temperaments, where one person's weakness is another person's strength, needs to be pursued.

Very little research has used the four temperaments as a basis for studying educational settings. There is a need for studies on team dynamics in educational settings using the four temperaments. What is

the best balance of temperaments? What happens when teachers of one temperament have administrators of an opposite temperament? How can colleges of education prepare teachers to work on teams and be prepared for leadership positions? What can schools do to promote teams, thus breaking the tradition of teacher isolation and individualism?

Visionaries and troubleshooters have the shortest stay in teaching. How can the teaching profession attract more visionaries and troubleshooters? Since troubleshooters are as prevalent in the general population as stabilizers, what can be done to make their school experience pleasant so they would have the desire to pursue teaching as a profession? What can colleges of education do to recruit visionaries and troubleshooters? Once they are recruited, how do schools keep visionaries and troubleshooters?

Conclusion

Keirsey's and Bates' (1984) finale to their book, Please Understand Me, provides a fitting conclusion to this study.

> What has been said? Well, everybody's different and everybody's OK in their style as is. Let's face it, most of us are strangers to each other. I have my desires, you have yours. You keep yours and I'll keep mine because what each of us wants is good. What's more, you have your talent and I have mine and I can admire you for yours. I hope you will reciprocate.
>
> It is simply not true that you and I go through the same stages to become mature. Maybe you had an identity crisis or two, but I didn't, and it's not because I'm immature or fixated at some stage, passage, or season of my life. I'm just not into identity, never have been, never will be. I've other fish to fry.
>
> Well, stranger, there isn't any way you can really understand me, but if you stop trying to change me to look like you, you might come to appreciate me. I'll settle for that. How about you?
> (p. 166)

This researcher is convinced that school change requires teacher leadership but that it must be a collaborative effort with administrators, and have representation of all four temperaments. Implementation of this concept allows individuality by accepting each other's strengths and weaknesses but replaces individualism with collaboration for school planning and decision making. Collaboration is vital according to numerous studies on school reform and this study confirms those findings.

The visionary alone is not the answer for school change. The stabilizer, the catalyst, the troubleshooter, and the visionary as a team provide a better answer for effective school reform.

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